

The role of Regional Authorities in the Italian system of assistance to victims of THB: experiences and perspectives

23th November 2017

Assistance to victims of THB: the commitment of Italian Regional Authorities

1. The first “Report concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings issued by Italy”, adopted on 4 July 2014 and published on 22 September 2014, at point 29 describes in a short passage the contribution of Italian Regional Authorities to the national system against THB:

f. Regional and local authorities

29. The Italian state territory is subdivided into 20 regions, 109 provinces and some 8.000 municipalities. Regional and local authorities play an important role in the provision of assistance to victims of THB. They co-finance both the special support programmes for victims under Article 13 of Law No. 228/2003 and programmes of assistance and social integration under Article 18 of the Consolidated Immigration Act. The social services of the provinces and municipalities are often cornerstones of the local anti-trafficking networks, which also involve the police, prosecutors and civil society actors. Further, as noted in paragraph 24, the social services of the municipality of Venice run the nationwide toll-free anti-trafficking helpline.

According to the 2014 Report, the Regions have an “important role” in the assistance of trafficking victims. However, no elements are given to support this statement, except the reference to the co-financing of assistance programmes.

2. During an almost twenty-year activity of the national anti-THB system, the Regions indeed have had an important role:

- Many Regions applied directly for a role of “Leader Applicant” or “partner” to the Calls by the Department for Equal Opportunities to carry out assistance programmes for the victims of THB;
- With “European Social Fund”, and “Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund”, some Regions carried out many actions in the provision of assistance to victims of THB: some concerning literacy, knowledge of Italian language and professional training, some others focused on employment integration and full social inclusion, or on the assisted voluntary return.

3. Many Regions, in the last twenty years, answered as “Leader Applicant” to the Calls by the Department for Equal Opportunities for funding “Article 18 assistance programmes”: Piemonte, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Liguria, Marche, Umbria, Lazio, Campania, Calabria, Puglia.

Some Regions have been “Leader Applicant” only on occasional basis, while some others had this role without interruption since 1999 (when the first Call was issued by the Department for Equal Opportunities to sustain “Article 18 assistance programmes”).

Other Regions committed themselves in the projects not as “Leader Applicant” but as “partner” (for example, Toscana and Trentino Alto-Adige). However, in the role of partner these Regions can guarantee a great

support to victims' assistance, creating an integrated governance between public and private sector and between Regions and local authorities. In this way they avoid the fragmentation of interventions and of the consequent levels of responsibility.

The **Trentino Alto Adige Region** participates every year in the DEO Call for funding for projects. The Autonomous Province of Bolzano in agreement with Association "La Strada - Der Weg" onlus, Association Volontarius onlus, CONSIG soc. coop. since 2003 carries out social assistance and social integration programmes under the ALBA project. The project was born on the impetus of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano - Family, Women and Youth Office (currently Office for the Protection of Children and Social Inclusion).

In October 2017, the commitment of Regional Authorities was confirmed in the "2/2017 Call" from Department for Equal Opportunities. **The 40% of the "Applicant Leader" that will develop the national system of interventions from December 2017 are Regions: Piemonte, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Umbria, Lazio, Calabria, Puglia.**

4. The Regions gave a fundamental contribution to the anti-THB national system using the **European Social Fund** resources to implement **professional training, social and employment integration and social inclusion actions** for the victims. They also develop transnational actions and interregional projects. Such experiences were part of the FSE Regional Operational Plans for years 2000-2006, 2007-2013, and they are still today part of the current planning of years 2014-2020.

Good Practices: with European Social Fund resources, the Regions that have implemented good practices in employment integration of victims of THB are: Emilia-Romagna, Piemonte, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Umbria, Toscana.

Emilia-Romagna: The project "CHANCE - Inclusion Network" aimed at the implementation of vocational training, job placement, social inclusion for victims of serious exploitation and trafficking in human beings; it is carried out continuously within of Operational Programs Social Inclusion European Social Fund 2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020;

Piemonte: Fse 2014-2020 - Axis 2 Social Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty, Priority 9i, Specific Objective 7, Action 2, Regional Measure 1. Approval of the Direction Act for the implementation of Integrated Nature Policy Action complementary to work services for victims of serious exploitation and trafficking, period 2016-2018;

Friuli Venezia Giulia: traineeship activities and individualized projects for victims of trafficking and serious labour exploitation through co-design pathways and implementation of the disadvantaged call (Notice 16/18 Regional Law August 20, 2007, No 22, Article 6);

Umbria: co-funded with resources for the POR FSE 2014-2020: Axis II - objective 9.1 - Fight against poverty - the activation of extracurricular traineeships for victims of trafficking and serious exploitation;

Toscana: victims of trafficking and serious exploitation are among the beneficiaries of the POR FSE 2014-2020 - Tuscany Region, Thematic Objective 9 Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty and Discrimination, Axis B Social Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty, B.1 (9.i) - Active inclusion, also to promote equal opportunities and active participation, and improve employability, B.1.1 - Increasing employability and participation in the labor market through integrated and multidimensional pathways for the active inclusion of the most vulnerable persons.

In addition to this, **the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund resources** allowed the Regions to develop a territorial system of actions through services enhancement, civic and linguistic training development, cultural mediation, employment orientation and assisted voluntary return.

National system governance: The Regions role

5. During the three years that passed from the first GRETA report until today, the anti-THB national system has developed significant modifications.

These modifications were regarding the phenomenon (massive presence of trafficking victims, also underage, inside the migratory flows that arrived with the landings, and therefore massive presence of victims of THB and severe exploitation among those asylum-seekers hosted by reception system lead by Prefectures and CAS Emergency Reception Centers), and new legislative acts such as:

- The “National Action Plan against the trafficking and severe exploitation of human being” adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 February 2016;
- Prime Ministerial Decree of 16 May 2016;
- Legislative Decree of 18 August 2015, n.142 implementing Directive 2013/33/UE on standards for the reception of applicants of international protection;
- Law 7 April 2017 n. 47 on provisions for unaccompanied minors’ protection measures.

6. All these developments have reaffirmed and strengthened the role of Italian Regional Authorities in the national system against THB.

7. The “2016-2018 National Plan against the trafficking and severe exploitation of human being” adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 February 2016 have clarified the Regions role in the anti – THB regional system.

The National Plan has instituted a Steering Committee led by the Department for Equal Opportunities, with the participation of the representatives of Regional authorities, and established that:

The transversal nature of the public powers involved regards the various levels of government, and in particular the need for greater accountability and engagement - particularly in victim protection - of regional and local bodies, as those closest to the management of this phenomenon and as the holders (the Regions) of resources from the structural funds, which can certainly strengthen available national resources with a view to complementarity.

It is necessary to integrate the various levels of planning and implementation that work to combat the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings and which still do not appear to be integrated enough: (...) **the regional level** represented by:

- a) the local Departments of health and welfare which, through funding and regulatory adjustments, work to ensure that activities of emergence and of contact with populations at risk of trafficking and severe exploitation (systemic preparatory actions for the system of interventions to aid trafficking victims) are implemented within local policies aimed at prevention and the protection of health, combating exploitation and trafficking in human beings, and recognition at the legal and administrative level of victims of trafficking and severe exploitation present in the local area and the opportunity to access all health, social/welfare, assistance and integration measures established for vulnerable groups;
- b) the local Departments of labour and training which, through the management of the ESF, ensure that measures for training and to support work access and stability also envisage as beneficiaries victims of trafficking and severe exploitation included in the programmes, or establish training processes at the operational/bureaucratic and administrative level with methods of access, implementation timing, methodologies and techniques that meet the needs and requirements of foreign nationals who have migrated due to processes of victimisation and exploitation, and not the requirements of training and job placement agencies and professionals.

(...) It is therefore appropriate to establish an integrated Department for Equal Opportunities/other national Administrations/Regions intervention, in which the various funds

contribute, based on their nature, management responsibilities and reference geographical area, towards funding specific areas of intervention. It is therefore necessary for the Steering Committee to be linked not only with the players (legal, health, social, labour, etc.) operating at various levels locally, but also with those that may access diversified funding with in the Regional administrations themselves, first and foremost ESF and ERDF.

8. With the Call 2/2017, the Department for Equal Opportunities (DEO) has redefined on regional basis the Italian system of assistance to victims of THB based on article 18 Legislative Decree 289/98.

The new territorial deployment of interventions looks like a definite step forward in the “regionalization” process that has been introduced for many years by the Department for Equal Opportunities.

This department has introduced some changes in the yearly issued Calls and has progressively encouraged the National Systems subjects to work together creating overprovincial territorial projects.

The Regions contribution to the anti-THB national system: future perspectives

(GRETA Questionnaire - questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 31, 33)

9. In the light of the new framework that was defined in the last three years, Regions can assure a decisive contribution to the national system of interventions to protect victims of THB.

In 20 years of activity, Regions have developed some best practices – described below – that are a reference for future interventions.

The presence of Regions, in the governance of “territorial projects”, can promote good local governance, connection among different areas of actions, trans-sectoral actions

(GRETA Questionnaire, question 1)

Local governance of assistance projects, is more effective when the Region plays the role of “Applicant leader” and the local administrations are “Actuator institutions” because the synergy created among different public administrations promotes basic principles of good administration: simplification, rationalization, economy of scale.

Regional direct intervention increases capacities to act transversally across the different areas and services involved. This is very important because the connection among different areas and the **trasversality between actions have acquired, during the years, more and more importance** (see the issue of applicants for international protection, unaccompanied minors or the theme of gender-related violence). It has also become the most important way to fulfill territorial projects that implement the measures included in assistance programs in accordance with article 18 Legislative Decree 286/98.

From an administrative and organizational point of view, having a coordinating role, Regions might connect different action plans both at a local level (local authorities, private social associations) and at a national and transnational level.

From a technical and operational point of view, Regions can implement “system actions” regarding “the entire system” in order to grant to single local nets a connection with a “supra-territorial” dimension, essential to act in the THB field.

Direct involvement of public administrations might promote closer cooperative relationship with other institutional actors: the agreements with institutional actors as “prefectures, police headquarters, Carabinieri and financial police provincial headquarters, health authorities, district attorney’s offices (Procure), educational institutions, professional associations, trade unions, public and private institutions as mentioned by article 2, subsection 2, letter f) of the Prime Ministerial Decree of 16 May 2016.

Good practices: within the governance of territorial projects, good practices have been developed by Piemonte, Umbria, Veneto.

Piemonte: since 2016 has identified in the tool of a regional steering committee the appropriate seat of comparison between all the institutional and non-governmental subjects, who are in various ways dealing with trafficking, as well as of all regional departments for a multidisciplinary and integrated approach;

Umbria: received by DGR n. 205/2017 the National Anti-Trafficking Plan 2016-2018, and established two permanent coordination and comparison bodies:

- the Governance Table of the Anti-Trafficking Regional System, which will allow to define strategies and directives in the region (political level of the project), composed of a referent for each institutional subject;
- the Coordination Table, which will complement the governance table in the implementation of the actions, with the aim of harmonizing the implementation of the measures across the regional territory, and fostering the link between the Central Administration and those who have, in various ways, a role in dealing with victims of trafficking.

Veneto: operational partner of the Veneto Anti-Trafficking Network (NAve) project, has two management steering committee: one related to the governance of a single and integrated system of emergence and assistance to victims of trafficking and/or serious exploitation in regional territory and another specification for technical and operational aspects addressed to operators in the regional public and private sector.

Identification of trafficking victims among applicants for international protection

(GRETA Questionnaire, question n. 31)

The issue of trafficking victims among applicants for international protection, in particular among people who landed in Italy after passing through Libya, has become in the last few years one of the most important issues in the implementation of measures of identification and assistance planned by Article 18 of Legislative decree 286/98.

Regions can promote the adoption of homogenous measures on their territories in order to improve the identification of trafficking victims among applicants for asylum both before and after the passage, at the Territorial Commission for the international protection

Good practices: the Regions of Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia-Giulia, Umbria and Lazio have implemented good practices to identify trafficking victims among applicants for asylum.

Since 2015, the **Emilia-Romagna Region** and the Territorial Commission for the International Protection of Bologna, including the Forli section, have established a collaboration that has led to the definition of shared procedures for the identification and protection of potential victims present among the asylum seekers encountered by the Commission during the hearings;

since 2015 in **Friuli Venezia Giulia**, all the implementing bodies have an operational protocol with the Territorial Commission and from 2016 protocols with the "Questure" (also on the procedures to be adopted with MSNA) and with Prefectures for the training of FFOO personnel;

the **Umbria Region** promotes first-line contact and counselling against asylum seekers at the local reception facilities CAS or SPRAR in the Umbria region to provide self-determination tools to beneficiaries / to emancipate themselves from the exploitation network and thus encourage the emergence of asylum seekers who are victims of trafficking. An advisory service is provided at local refugee and asylum seekers' projects and at the Territorial Commission for International Protection Recognition. The new welcome structure is being tested for the implementation of a new type of specific intervention and integrated with the refugee reception system and asylum seekers;

since 2016, the **Lazio Region** has provided, in collaboration with the Prefecture of Rome, in the framework of the project "Antitrust Latium Network" a listening and consulting service for the identification and protection of potential victims addressed to persons detained in section feminine, the only one in Italy, of Ponte Galeria's Center for Permanent Repatriation (CPR). Within the same project she has been providing consultancy services for identifying potential victims and establishing the existence of the

requirements for insertion in the protection paths dedicated to the Immigration Centers and those of the protection system for applicants for international protection (SPRAR) of the regional territory, as well as to the Territorial Commissions of Rome and Frosinone for the recognition of international protection.

The Regions role has important consequences on **minor unaccompanied victims of trafficking**.

In the last few years this issue has become more and more important due to the new laws and the to the phenomenon evolution. Regions can strongly contribute to the matter, because Regional Authorities can promote a transversely across actions.

Good practices:

since 2015 in **Friuli Venezia Giulia**, the Office of the Guarantor for Minors works in concert with the Anti-trafficking Territorial Units (its functions are identified by L. R. No. 9/2014, Article 8, subsection b, paragraph i). They are also a guarantee function dedicated specifically to unaccompanied minors who are victims of trafficking;

since 2016, the **Lazio Region**, in the framework of the project "Antitrust Latium Network", realizes protection, protection and protection of the immediate, long-term - second-level, integrated and multidimensional protection for minor victims of trafficking or of exploitation.

Training of different professionals involved in the actions

(GRETA Questionnaire, question n. 6)

Due to the specific kind of these phenomena, International conventions and guidelines promotes training initiatives with a multi-professional approach and with the involvement of different targets (police, judicial authority, social actors).

Good practice: The Regions of Umbria, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia-Giulia, and Liguria have implemented good practices in this field.

In order to strengthen the system size of interventions, the **Umbria Region** - through the Umbra School of Public Administration - organized a training course (consisting of 9 days, for a total of 58 hours) in 2017 addressed to the participants of the Coordination Table (exponents Prefectures, Bureaus, Judiciary, Police Officers, Law Enforcement, Local Health Care Units, Municipalities, Third Sector, Regional Ancients, Unions) that is characterized by a design that has chosen to operate on two levels:

- approach, strategy and actions: definition of a proposal for guidelines on building a multi-agency strategy in the region;
- role, motivation, goals;

The **Emilia-Romagna Region**, thanks to the participation in the 2014-2015 TRUTH project, has implemented a training course in e-learning on the topic of trafficking / serious exploitation of human beings, aimed at providing basic training to: Municipal Police Operators, State Police Agents, Labor Inspectors, Social Workers in the Immigration Area. The training course was then available to the e-learning system of the Emilia-Romagna region, and it can be used free of charge by any relevant Italian public administration;

the **Friuli Venezia Giulia Region** finances the joint training of FFOO personnel and public and private personnel in the social sector through the European Social Fund for Growth and Employment - 2014-2020 Operational Program. Specific Program 37/15: "Joint and permanent training of workers to counter the social exclusion of the most vulnerable people", as per Decree 4 September 2017, no. 7280;

the **Liguria Region** with the funds of the Department for Equal Opportunities has carried out a training course on the topic of trafficking / serious exploitation of human beings, involving: Municipal Police Operators, State Police agents, Social Workers in the Social Area, Ecological Operators that being present in the area at night time could constitute a valid network and report critical issues.

Identification and assistance of severe labour exploitation and forced begging victims

(GRETA Questionnaire, questions n. 2, 4, 33)

In the last few years some Regions which play the role of “Applicant Leader” in interventions established by Article 18 of Legislative Decree No 286/1998 (Immigration Law) have started experimental procedures in the field of begging and illegal activities exploitation.

Good practices: Veneto, Friuli Venezia-Giulia, Calabria, Umbria and Emilia-Romagna have implemented good practices in this field. It is particularly important to quote the project “STOP FOR BEG - Against emerging forms of trafficking in Italy: exploited immigrants in the international phenomenon of forced BEGGING”, promoted by the Region Veneto.

the **Calabria Region**, the promoter of the project “IN.C.I.P.I.T. - Calabria Initiative for the Identification, Protection and Integration of Trafficking Victims” devoted to the theme of emigration and assistance to victims of labor exploitation as an important initiative in the second part of 2014 (under the project “Programming and management of policies Migration”, conducted since 2012 by Italia Lavoro, a technical agency of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies), a system of actions aimed at strengthening interinstitutional cooperation and improving the planning of migration policies, work and integration of people working in the workplace migrants across the country, funded by the ESF under PON Governance and Objective 1 Convergence - Institutional Axis and Capacity and the Migration Policy Fund;

the **Veneto Region** has promoted the project “STOP FOR BEG - Against emerging phenomena of trafficking in Italy: Exploited immigrants in the international phenomenon of forced BEGGING”, devoted to emerging forms of trafficking in Italy: exploited migrants and victims of trafficking in the international phenomenon of ‘forced begging’. The project, funded by the European Commission (ISEC program), developed from 2013 to 2015, proposed to promote and improve networking and cooperation between the Forces of the Order, Public Authorities and Associations to activate prevention interventions and contrasts with the phenomenon of forced migration and irregular immigration for the purpose of begging and protecting the victims of this form of migratory phenomenon. Among the partners are also the Department for Equal Opportunities - Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The project carried out a research on the phenomenon of hiring to know the phenomenon and the contact of the population dedicated to the mendicity aimed at the identification of potentially victims of trafficking for the purpose of begging and joint training of social workers and Forces of the Order for the definition of trace indicators for begging;

among the co-beneficiary partners of the project “STOP FOR BEG”, the **Friuli Venezia Giulia Region** (Directorate of Labor, Training, Trade and Equal Opportunities) with the task of implementing staff training activities dedicated to combating trafficking in minors unlawful. The result of this project was the conclusion of the Operational Protocol between “Questure” and Region in 2016.

both the **Umbria Region** and the **Emilia-Romagna Region** have started, since 2016, specific interventions aimed at the emergence and identification of exploitation victims in the field of hunting.

Access to healthcare of victims or potential victims involved in sex trafficking

(GRETA Questionnaire, questions n. 2, 4, 33)

The Regions, owing to their healthcare exclusive competence, can strongly promote the adoption of measures that facilitate the access to territorial healthcare services, also to disadvantaged people.

Good practice: the Regions of Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Friuli Venezia-Giulia, Umbria and Veneto have implemented good practices in this field.

the **Emilia-Romagna Region** promotes, coordinates and supports with the resources of the Regional Health Fund, annually since 1996, social-health prevention actions for people involved in prostitution, both in the street or indoor (in the houses and night clubs). The ownership of the interventions is borne by the same public administrations that, under the “Beyond the Road” project, implement the emergence and assistance programs referred to in Article 18 of Legislative Decree 286/98. In this way, actions are integrated into a wider system, thus forming one of the phases of the range of interventions ranging from first contact to full social integration. Health prevention interventions for people involved in prostitution markets are now firmly integrated into regional health planning and are a specific action envisaged by the 2015-2018 Regional Prevention Plan.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: the regional law December 09, 2015, n. 31 "Rules for the Social Integration of Immigrant Foreigners" provides access to healthcare for all persons included people in protection programmes. It provides for the organization, also at the regional health service bodies and, in any case, in the main social and health services, linguistic and cultural mediation services, hence also in the context of care and prevention. The Regional Law October 16, 2014, no. 17 "Reorganizing the institutional and organizational structure of the Regional Health Service and rules on health and social care planning" ensures, as well as Italian citizens, access to trafficking victims to prevention routes, maternity and maternity programs where necessary with local authorities, to health routes for people with mental disabilities. In Trieste, the personal route of health for transgender people has been successfully tested.

The Unity of the Free Life project of the **Umbria Region** coordinates and implements prevention actions for local social services, addressed to people involved in prostitution, street and indoor, with particular attention to trafficking victims and asylum seekers. In this field he has initiated training networks with public and private subjects.

With regional law no. 41 of 16 December 1997 "Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation: Protection and Promotion of Persons", the **Veneto Region** promotes, coordinates and finances contact, emerging and preventive social and health care for people who are victims of trafficking and / or serious exploitation sexual. Since 2016, the Veneto Region, as a partner of the Network Antitratta Veneto (NAve) project, co-finances this line of intervention within the phases aimed at consolidating a unique and integrated system of emerging and assisting trafficking victims and / or serious exploitation.